

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION TO PROMOTE ORAL INTERACTION AMONG BLIND LEARNERS IN A MAINSTREAM CLASS.

**UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION TO PROMOTE ORAL
INTERACTION AMONG BLIND LEARNERS IN A MAINSTREAM CLASS**

(EXPLORATORY PRACTICE STUDY)

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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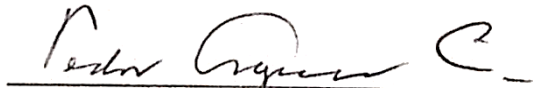
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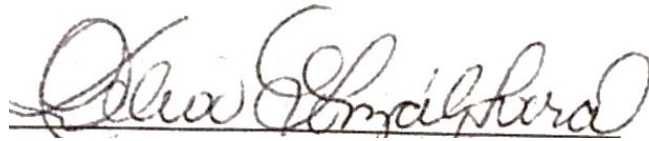
ACCEPTATION PAGE

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Judge

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Judge

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ABSTRACT

Children have the right to be educated regardless their abilities or disabilities, social status, religion and so forth. Unfortunately, over the years, people such as blind children have been excluded from society depriving them of their right of education (McCarthy & Shevlin, 2017). In the context of this study, few opportunities are given to blind students to improve the speaking skill. Moreover, I had a puzzle about teaching English to blind learners studying English in regular classrooms. Then, I need to understand how Differentiated instruction works within a regular lesson to promote oral interaction to blind students. Accordingly, this study aimed to explore teacher's understanding of differentiated instruction for developing blind learners' oral interaction. This exploratory practice study was carried out observing my own practice implementing differentiated instruction for teaching 3 blind students within a regular classroom from a public school in Monteria. Findings from this study evidenced that to ensure a coherent planning for all I must provide instruction that caters for all students. Besides, I must locate the challenges I faced in this process turning them into learning opportunities.

Key Words: Differentiated instruction, blind learners, inclusion, teaching practice

RESUMEN

Todos los niños tienen derecho a la educación, sin importar sus habilidades o incapacidades, estrato social, religión y demás. Desafortunadamente, a lo largo de los años niños como los estudiantes invidentes han sido excluidos de la sociedad privándolos de su derecho a la educación. (McCarthy & Shevlin, 2017). En el contexto de este estudio, los estudiantes ciegos tienen pocas oportunidades para desarrollar la habilidad de hablar en inglés. Asimismo, yo tenía una confusión en cuanto enseñar inglés a estudiantes ciegos aprendiendo el idioma dentro de un salón de clases regular. Por lo tanto, necesito entender cómo usar la instrucción diferenciada en una lección de clases regular para promover la interacción oral por parte de los estudiantes. Este estudio de práctica exploratoria se llevó acabo observando mi propia práctica docente mientras implementaba la instrucción diferenciada enseñando a 3 estudiantes ciegos de una institución pública en Montería. Los resultados de este estudio demuestran que para garantizar una planeación coherente debo asegurarme de proveer una instrucción que atienda a las necesidades de todos los estudiantes, igualmente debo identificar los desafíos que enfrenté en este proceso y tomarlos como una oportunidad para afianzar mi práctica docente.

Palabras claves: Instrucción diferenciada, estudiantes ciegos, inclusión, práctica docente

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1. INTRODUCTION

Every child has the right to be educated regardless of its abilities or disabilities, social status, religio, and so forth. Unfortunately, over the years, people such as blind children have been excluded from society depriving them of their right of education. As stated by McCarthy & Shevlin (2017), “there has been a history of exclusion and missed opportunities for blind/vision impaired young people within all realms of education. In the past, these children were generally assigned to particular types of education based on their impairment” (p.3). In recent years, many laws have been created to guarantee the successful inclusion of special needs children in education without any exception. UNESCO (2006) defines Inclusion as changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (p.13). Thus, nowadays many children have been registered in mainstream schools. However, it seems that segregation is still present in their school life, probably due to many factors such as lack of teacher’s knowledge to teach students with different disabilities. This is the strongest factor why inclusion is not achieved in most of regular classrooms. Students seemed to be integrated but little is done to guarantee their inclusion and development of skills. Accordingly, this study intended to understand how Differentiated instruction worked for designing lessons that caters for blind learners and their oral interaction in class. This study was carried out with me as the pre-service teacher and three blind students from Cecilia de Lleras School. During the English classes, blind students were

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inside the classroom but they participated little during activities. As a result, they had few opportunities to improve their speaking skills. Moreover, I wanted to understand how to teach English to blind learners studying English in regular classrooms. I did not understand how Differentiated instruction was designed to work with blind students. Hence, the purpose of this exploratory practice study was to explore teacher's understanding of differentiated instruction for developing blind learners' oral interaction. The study answered this research question: How do I provide differentiated instruction while ensuring coherent instructional design for developing blind learners' oral interaction?

Differentiated instruction (henceforth DI) is a very useful strategy since it promotes inclusion. In Blaz (2006) words, with differentiated instruction "[t]eachers must mark or identify the differences both in students and in possible teaching strategies, and make adjustments according to what will most benefit students and best facilitate learning in the classroom" (p.2). Then, differentiated instruction seems to allow teachers to adjust student's instruction to offer them different possibilities to learn getting all the students' potential to include everyone within one lesson. However, this theory might be understood and realized in real classrooms with diverse teaching strategies and students. For this reason, I selected the following areas to cover in order to fully understand and reflect on my teaching practice as an inclusive teacher before expecting immediate changes in students' oral interaction. How can I apply DI effectively? How can I respond to all multiple intelligences and students' styles? How do I know I am truly applying DI? How to adapt materials?

The following chapters reference the important concepts and some studies relative to inclusive education and differentiated instruction. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, which include the type of research, presents the research questions and the data collection procedures

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useful to gather all the information. Finally, chapter four addresses to the expected outcomes regarding this study.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following chapter addresses the differences between segregation, integration and inclusion. Besides, it highlights the main characteristics of blind students and provides the definition of differentiated instruction and its efficacy to promote inclusive practices.

2.1 Conceptual framework

2.1.1 Segregation, Integration and Inclusion:

Over the years, there has been segregation in many ways such as education, social areas and labor fields (Garcia, Nieto & Arbelaez, 2006). In education, it is evident how children with special needs have been excluded by depriving them of access to education in ordinary schools and separating them from society. Today, it is well known that in many schools, children with disabilities have been integrated, giving them a place in the institution, but at the same time isolating them. Evidently, most institutions are still in the process of inclusion. According to Abt associates (2006) “Segregation occurs when the education of students with disabilities is provided in separate environments, in isolation from students without disabilities” (p.3) that is to say, segregation occurs when students with disabilities do not have access to the same opportunities regular students have in their contexts, underestimating the skills and strengths these students have. Likewise, when students with disabilities are integrated, they are still excluded since they are demanded to adapt themselves to the requirements of the institution. Then, there is integration when students with disabilities have the opportunity to attend a mainstream school and they can be in regular classroom. Nonetheless, they do not have access to the same learning process as regular students do. (Abt associates, 2006). On the contrary, inclusion seeks to give everyone the same opportunities, regardless of race, personal conditions,

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disabilities or special needs taking into account that it involves making some adjustments in the institution in order to successfully include children with special needs. As stated by UNESCO (2006) that “[i]nclusion involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children” (p. 13). Having this in mind there is an urgency that the educational institutions will be instructed in order to receive all children properly without any exception. Understanding that every child is unique and everyone is special. Moreover, making the adequate adjustments to offer every children access to a quality education.

2.1.2 Differentiated instruction

DI is known as an approach of inclusion as it tends to adjust the classes taking into account the students’ needs. Promoting that every student, without any exception, will be part of the same learning process. In her book differentiated instruction: a guide for foreign language teachers. Deborah Blaz explains in details what DI is and its impact in an inclusive classroom. In Blaz (2006) words, “this term encompasses a wide range of teaching strategies and attitudes that focus on the two concerns of any good educator: Students and learning” (p.1). Likewise, Tomlinson (2001) states that “in a differentiated classroom the teacher proactively plans and carries out varied approaches to content, process and product in anticipation of and response to student differences in readiness, interest, and learning needs” (p.7). Therefore, DI for promoting oral interaction to blind learners can be very useful, as it is an inclusive approach, it seems to allow the teacher to adjust student’s instructions to vary and offer them different possibilities to learn including everyone within one lesson. All of this with the aim to get all the students potential. Blaz (2006) also adds that “teachers must mark and identify the differences both in

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students and in possible teaching strategies, and make adjustments according to what will most benefit students and best facilitate learning in the classroom” (p. 2). In other words, the educator should mark a difference in the student's learning process and also in the procedures he or she follows in the classroom in order to lead each student to achieve the goals focus on the student's strength rather than student's weaknesses.

In addition, the author mentions the term development as an important word and affirm that teachers must assess, evaluate and reflect in order to identify what is better and what is not for their teaching process and highlight it as a key to fix what does not work.

To understand better how to differentiate a lesson Blaz (2006), explains that a lesson can be differentiate by content, process and product. First, when differencing by content Blaz (2006) explains that “it is the essential information, ideas, attitudes, skills or facts that students must grasp and be able to use” she also adds, “students access to content is the key building block in a differentiated classroom” (p. 9). Hence, the content lets teachers to identify what to teach, taking into account students' potential, interest and abilities. As stated by Blaz (2006), “one way to differentiate the content is to use a variety of texts or text types such as brochures, newspapers or music” (p.9). Clarifying that it is necessary to implement not just printed books because it would not be a real differentiation since those books are not accessible to dyslexic or blind children. Accordingly, the teacher must implement audios, videotapes or DVD's that contains alike information. In addition, Blaz (2006) mentions another way to differentiate content and it is “to give students choices in the type of instruction: direct instruction, concrete examples, worksheet practice, online work or more complex activities” (p.10). At the same time this way to differentiate content demands a pretesting in order to identify students that may not need direct instruction. Another important fact mentioned by Blaz (2006) is that “content must be concept

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focus” (p. 10), since the idea of just learn a large list of single words is not harmonious with differentiated instruction. On the contrary, the process and product let students to practice and prove their expertise in the knowledge of the basic concepts, principles and skills. Second, differentiating the process include, making variations in the complexity of the materials, Varying the activities so the concepts of the unit can be identified taking into account the interests of the students, cognitive capacities or learning styles (Blaz, 2006). The author specifies three essential components when varying process: First, the pre assessment must be done before hand with the aim to identify what is the starter point, which will facilitate to choose the instruction or practice required as it is important to teach the skills considerably in advance of the students’ previous knowledge. Second, provide a balance between teacher assigned and student- selected tasks to avoid that students always choose to work with the skills they are good at and omit the other skills. Third, groups must change constantly. Organized them based on a continuous assessment taking into account the learning, behavior and performance of students. It is also relevant when grouping students to take into consideration students’ interest, learning styles and so forth. (Blaz, 2006). Finally, to differentiate the product involves varying the complexity of the product considering that there is not only one-way to assess students; it depends on the students learning styles or multiple intelligences. There are two ways to present the product. Formal like a report or informal like an interview. In any case, the most important thing is to consider the students’ abilities to be evaluated. In some cases, giving them the opportunity to choose the way they feel more comfortable to be assessed. (Blaz, 2006)

In Blaz (2006) words, there are several key elements for differentiating product. First, “product should be accessible and challenging but should not overwhelm students”. It means that product must be comfortable so students could be motivated to work on it. Then, “Product

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should emphasize critical and creative thinking as the students apply what they have learned”. This enhances students to evidence their own understanding of the topic and how it could be applied in real life. In addition, “product assigned by ability level should not penalize the advanced students” subsequently students with higher levels will not considerate their participation as penance but as an incentive. Finally, “Products should be viewed not just as a way to measure learning but also as a logical outcome or extension of that learning” the idea is to change the way the students perceive the assessment so they can consider it as part of the learning process rather than something that just evaluate it.

Principles of differentiated instruction: According to Tomlinson (2000), the main principles that must include a differentiated classroom are:

- Assessment is ongoing and tightly linked to instruction: it is crucial to identify through assessment how students acquire information in the whole process. The assessment is very useful as it guides the teacher on how to manage with the students taking into account how the students learn. All the assessment teacher implements before, during and after the lessons are opportunities to understand students’ readiness, interests and learning. Thus, it becomes an important tool when planning the instruction.
- Teachers work hard to ensure "respectful activities" for all students: Another characteristic also mentioned is that all students must be involved in the same activities and process. Teachers should plan activities that become interesting, appealing and focused on essential understanding and skills for all students. Accordingly, the activities planned by the teacher must be in the same way motivating. Avoiding benefiting just a selected group but giving the same opportunities to every students to learn equally.

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- Flexible grouping is a hallmark of the class: Lastly, another principle highlighted by Tomlinson (2000) is that “Teachers plan extended periods of instruction so that all students work with a variety of peers over a period of days”. (p.4) Teachers must design lessons that give students the chance to work with their classmates. As a result, their learning process is enriching by sharing the different thinking and allows learners to be related with their classmates and experiment variability within the class. Sometimes teachers organize the groups, sometimes students select their peers.

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Table 1:

Parallel of what DI is and what is not. Blaz, (2006)

What differentiated instruction is	What differentiated instruction is not
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student center · For all students · For heterogeneous groups · A change in philosophy about how learning should take place · Multiple approaches or options for content, process and product · A mix of whole class group and independent learning · More about quality than quantity · Flexible and varied · Proactive in the planning stage · Rooted in assessment · Based on continual reflection and adjustments to help students to learn well · A belief system that says all learners come to the classroom with potential ready to be accessed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Class centered · Mainly with students with learning problems · A tracking system by abilities · A recipe for learning (it is how to teach, not what to teach) · A different lesson plan for every student(individualized instruction) · Whole group drill and practice or any single structure or activity · Fact-based learning alone · Unmanageable or undisciplined · Modifying the instruction up or down in difficulty · A method that you will need all new materials for · Cost free · Just about learning styles · Just a set of strategies and activities

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2.1.3 Blind Learners

Castellano (1997), analyzing blind people, explains: “There are tall ones and short ones, bright ones and not-so-bright ones, very dear people and pretty obnoxious people” furthermore, she continues, “blind people are just like everyone else. There is no one blind personality, no psychology of blindness.” With this in mind it is possible to understand that blind learners are completely able to do what regular children do, since they have visual limitations but they also have many skills that could help them to develop whatever they want as long as they are well guided. Yanoff (2007) highlight some important facts about students with blindness. The author affirms that; “blind students learn to use their hearing to better advantage” (p.126). Then, it is significant that teachers also take advantage of it to include them more effectively within the classroom. Yanoff (2007) also point the importance to know that blindness has no relation with intelligence. Thus, the scholastics expectations must be high as it is with sighted students since blind pupils are capable to achieve the same goals proposed in a course even though the work demanded to them can vary. Moreover, Yanoff (2007) underpins the ability of blind children to adapt well in most classes. Taking into account all of the above it is possible to say that some blind students’ weaknesses can be sighted students’ strength and vice versa which make blind children look like they really are normal children with a special need but also with many abilities, talents and strength that allows them to be part of a mainstream school.

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Policies that support blind teaching and learning in Colombia: the following table represents the Colombian policies that promote inclusive education in Colombia:

Table 2:

Main policies that promote inclusion in Colombia. García, Nieto & Arbeláez, (2015)

Year	Policies	Focus
2013	Inclusión- revolución educativa Ministerio de Educación Nacional, política de educación inclusiva en Colombia (Decree 366-2009)	It gives priority to education of vulnerable populations and within them. To make them productive so they become autonomous and strengthen social their relations.
2011	Asamblea Nacional Constituyente (National Constituent Assembly)	It creates inclusion that provisions that addressed ethnic and race-based interests, like communal land rights and political participation
2011	Law of Anti-Discrimination, No. 1482, 2011	It contains the antidiscrimination bill, and in November of the same year President Juan Manuel Santos signed it into law
1991	Constitución política de Colombia de 1991, Laws 115 de Educación de 1994, 361 - 1997, 1098 de 2006, Decree 366 de 2009, and law 1346 de 2009 , law 762	It advocates that parents of children with disabilities should not struggle finding available spaces at Institutions. It is the responsibility of the school to accommodate differences in learners.

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Evidently, Colombian government is working on generating opportunities that tends to eradicate discrimination promoting the same opportunities for all in schools. Moreover, it encourage people with disabilities to become productive, autonomous and independent. Which result in favorable opportunities for blind learners to have access to the education system in Colombia.

2.1.4 Adaptations

As mentioned above students with blindness are completely able to be part of a mainstream school since they have the abilities to do it as sighted children do. However, blind learners also face obstacles regarding reading materials, writing, visual resources and so forth. As stated by Wilkinson (2012), who explains the learning process of blind students in terms of their limitations when reading, lecturing and writing. Giving at the same time some strategies to face these limitations. Some of the adaptations described are:

- **Verbal commentaries:** Verbal commentaries are very useful to describe an image, when the teacher is writing on the board, when is entering or leaving the person's presence, when showing visual aids and so forth. As stated by Kleegen and Wallin (2015) audio description allows a person to translate any visuals into words in order to offer blind people access to the graphics. Moreover, there are some aspects to take into account when the teacher is giving verbal commentaries: It must be clear and natural, do not cover the mouth with the hands when speaking, with visuals aids if possible describe the content that will be presented beforehand. Teacher must identify her or him by name, also the name of students that will make an intervention just in case blind students do not recognize their voice yet. (Wilkinson, 2012)

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- **Learners support workers:** According to Enjelvin (2009), “An Educational Support Worker provides individual assistance to students with disabilities in order to enhance their learning experience and help them to fulfill their academic potential” (p.58). This person can be a professional to work on it or sometimes a sighted student within the classroom. Then, the author clarifies that the LSW’s role is not to replace blind students in the classroom but assist them. As students with disabilities must be also independent and sometimes the LSW tends to over-intervene. Then, the LSW’s must have clear their role in the classroom that are mainly give students’ support taking notes or describing them the visual materials such as pictures, videos or written text and so on.
- **Audiovisual materials:** Taking advantage of the sense of hearing audio materials such as audiobooks or visual information converted into audio material are very beneficial when teaching students with blindness. However, the teacher must take into account some aspects such as the sound that should be with high quality. Moreover, all the visual content should be always described by the teacher or the sighted students or providing the blind students the necessary materials beforehand. When presenting slides or poster the teacher must describe with general details the visuals, then giving more details such as “on the top left”, “on the top right corner” and so forth. Descriptions than come from the classmates or a different sighted person are also very useful. (Maar, 2018)
- **Hands-on materials:** Hands on experience is a useful approach as it is easier for children to achieve a specific objective if they get a related experience. In Maar (2018) words, “This multisensory approach can be of particular benefit to the student in the classroom who is blind, as experiential learning has proven to enrich the learning process and helps in overcoming the challenges associated with the vision loss” (p.14). In view that blind learners develop the tactile

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sense is very helpful to implement touching activities that will facilitate their learning process by experience. Touching will enhance the visual sense of students enabling them to coordinate the knowledge easily.

2.2 Literature review

This section is divided into two parts. First, it describes studies concerning the use of strategies to include blind learners in regular English classes and the effectiveness when implementing differentiated instructions techniques. Second, it describes studies concerning how to enhance the teacher practices while implementing differentiated instruction. Arroyo and Zabaleta (2015) explored the strategies used to teach special needs and regular students within a classroom, particularly, to identify how an English teacher implement differentiated instruction to teach English to six Visually Impaired students at Cecilia de Lleras School. Through Observations of the classes, interviews to teachers and focus groups to visually impaired students were possible to answer the questions. Observations revealed that there were some adaptations implemented by the teacher to differentiate the instruction to the VI students. Some of the strategies were verbal commentaries, the use of questions, touching, the use of activities games and Learner Support Worker. Results from the study showed that VI students had a positive attitude towards the strategies implemented by the teacher, which was evident in their performance among the activities. On the other hand, it was evident that the students were excluded from some activities that results on negative attitudes in their performance. Finally, it evidenced the necessity to make teachers aware of inclusive practices with the aim to give the same opportunities to everyone including visually impaired students.

A similar study was conducted by Bohorquez and Agudelo (2015) who explored the aspects of teacher's methodology that were being differentiated in terms of content, process and

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product to teach English to Visually impaired students. Observations and interviews were implemented as a tool to gather the required evidences. The results showed that in terms of content just a few classes were differentiated. It also exposed the use of verbal commentaries to differentiate the process as well as the use of Learner support workers, adaptations to the materials and accommodations in the instruction which revealed that the product was successfully differentiated.

Another similar project was carried out in Monteria, Cordoba by Acosta and Barreto (2016) who explored Visually Impaired and regular students' attitudes and behavior after implementing peer group as a differentiated instruction strategy. Observations, interviews and focus group were useful to get the results. The findings evidenced how the use of peer groups as a differentiated instruction technique allowed students to change the perception they had about working cooperatively which promoted the successfully inclusion of visually impaired students in the mainstream class with regular students. Another important finding was how the use of peer group allows VI students demonstrate their talents and their capacities while performing the activities.

On the other hand, Arenas (2012) carried out a study to understand how blind people can be included in a regular foreign language class without being isolated from their classmates. The author implemented some strategies such as learning braille, meeting for extra work with the blind learner and transcribing dialogues. Exams revealed that teachers are not prepared to work with students with different disabilities and the deficiency of material existent to work with them. Additionally, the study showed that a teacher with the right tools and the correct preparation could get all the students potential regardless their disabilities. It was evident how a blind learner is able to finish successfully a foreign language course since there were just 5

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students in the whole class who finished the program without failing any course and one of them was the blind learner.

Likewise, a study conducted in Indonesia by Rachmawati; et all (2016) who sought for the indicators and measurements models to improve the strategies applied to generate inclusive education for children with special needs in Indonesia. Observation to students and interviews to teachers revealed that the application of inclusive education in Indonesia in terms of lesson plans were not adapted for students' needs. The results evidence the need to assess teachers in order to identify their training when implementing differentiated Instruction as well as the teacher's awareness of students' interest to decide on the best practices that fit to address the students' learning style.

On the other hand, to understand the teacher practice using differentiated instruction a study was conducted in Iceland by Oliver (2016) who investigated teachers' perceptions about differentiated instruction in the language classroom in order to improve the teaching practices and become more responsive to the needs of the students. The instruments to collect the data were semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews and one-on-one interviews. The results of this study showed confusion between the individualized instruction and differentiated instruction among those whose mother tongue is Iceland. Teachers' answers pointed that they want to satisfy students' needs, which sometimes is possible when students' interests are taken into account. Nevertheless, teachers usually feel overwhelmed, as they are not clear on how to meet the students' needs appropriately. The findings also highlighted an increased implementation of differentiated instruction when the teachers collaborated.

A similar study was conducted by Whipple (2012) to explore teachers' understanding of differentiated instruction and their perceptions of their ability to implement DI in grades

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kindergarten through sixth. This quantitative study utilized a survey study methodology, which was sent to over 100 participants electronically to get the data. Observations of this study showed that teachers who participated in the survey had a high level of understanding of the concepts of differentiated instruction and the methods of how to differentiate in the classroom. However, there are components that teachers understand more in depth according to categorical statistics. In descending order, respondents better understood the following components: content, lesson planning, evaluation, process, interest and product.

A related study carried out by Burkett (2013) in Oklahoma, explored teacher perceptions connected to differentiated instruction and the influence of these on instructional practices. This study used interview questions to promote conversational dialogue. The data analysis revealed that teachers used the following differentiated instructional strategies: flexible grouping, tiered lessons, literature circles, and curriculum compacting. It also highlighted that the pre service, in service and professional development influences this strategy. Finally, the findings also demonstrated that the classroom environment conducive to learning and differentiated instruction is essential in an effective classroom.

Another helpful research study about the use of differentiated instruction was developed by Smith (2011) which explored the implementation of differentiated instruction from the perspective of teacher learning within the context of three high performing middle schools, in three school districts, in the state of Colorado. Interviews of classroom teachers, formal classroom observations, informal site observations, participant journaling and the collection of relevant existing documents were used for gathering the information. Observations from this study reveal the multidimensional reality of the classroom teacher and the many influences on teacher learning and the implementation of a complex instructional strategy. This study

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demonstrates that the implementation of differentiated instruction is strongly connected with the teachers' experiences during their school lives. It means that the experiences they had as students influence the methods they use as teachers.

Finally, a study conducted by Suprayogui, Valcke and Godwin (2017) aimed to understand teachers and their implementation of differentiated instruction in the classroom. The instruments implemented to collect the data were teacher background questionnaire, a DI implementation Scale, a teachers' DI self-efficacy scale, and a teaching beliefs scale. The findings show that implementation of DI seems to be high, but is still low. The analysis showed that 39% of the variation in DI implementation is significantly linked to DI self-efficacy beliefs, higher constructivist beliefs and higher classroom size.

All these studies showed how DI has been carried out in order to meet the needs of all students in a class. However, very few studies on the field of exploring teachers practice have been conducted for understanding how methods, approaches, and strategies work in class for the improvement of students' skills.

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the type of research used to carry out the study. A description of exploratory practice study is provided as well as the most important information concerning the research questions, context and data collection techniques used. The chapter ends up with the data analysis of the information gathered.

3.1 Type of research and research question

This proposal followed a naturalistic approach intended to explore teachers understanding of differentiated instruction for developing blind learners' oral interaction. As stated by Nunan & Baily (2009) "Naturalistic research is concerned with capturing the qualities and attributes of the phenomena being investigated rather than with measuring or counting" (p. 7). This study is considered a Naturalistic research since it was carried out in a regular environment where the teacher develops their pedagogical practices. Moreover, it is focused on the qualities the teacher presented while using differentiated instruction rather than measuring its effectiveness.

This study adopted an exploratory practice research designed to understand and reflect on the teaching practice through rich descriptions rather than trying to solve a specific problem. Donato (2017) explains, "...Exploring teaching practice refers to identify areas of teaching that the instructor wants to understand better and to engage in a cycle of working with evidence to deepen understanding of the nature of the problem and to improve instruction." (P.). In other words, instead of making an action plan this approach tends to identify and comprehend instructional situations so the actions and assessment can get an effective planning based on the evidence of a true understanding. Furthermore, "this model emphasizes that seeing and engaging

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in teaching differently requires first an understanding of the context of instruction and the realization that one's beliefs and attitudes are intimately connected to the exploration process.” (Donato, 2017. P.1). Therefore, before using approaches to teach or solve problems in a class, teachers first have to engage in understanding of their own teaching practices by reflecting on strategies, instruction, materials and so forth. Exploratory practice research involves questions such as: What are the challenges of teaching large classes? How can we re-organize instruction to address the needs of large classes? How do we effectively use technology and integrate technology into our instruction? Given the diverse abilities of students in classes, how can we differentiate our approach and our assignments in the same class? among others. The questions go with the pronoun "we" as most of the areas that are explored include several teachers from different universities conducting the same workshop. (Donato, 2017 P.3)

3.2 Context and participants

This exploratory practice study took place at Cecilia de Lleras School sited in Monteria, Colombia. The institution promotes the inclusion in the city having children with different disabilities within the classrooms. The institution has been part of bilingualism program called “Monteria Bilingüe” which tends to provide all the necessary materials to train teachers in order that they can develop appropriately the English classes. The selected classroom was from 7th grade. There were 40 students of which three of them are blind. The age range of the students was between 12 and 14 years old. On the other hand, the students took 4 hours of English classes per week. The English teacher has specialized studies to teach English as a foreign language. Moreover, he lived abroad for one year in order to enhance his English skills. Thus, he has a very good English level. However, as the students did not have English teacher in the previous grades their current English level were very basic. It means that students were not able to communicate

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in English, even with simple phrases such as recognizing their body parts. All students were part of the development of the lessons, but this study was focus specifically on the three blind learners. Besides, I was also part of this context as this study was intend to understand my own practice as a teacher implementing differentiated instruction. Currently, I am part of the English program from the University of Cordoba. In my experience as a teacher, I had never taught English to blind students in mainstream classrooms. Likewise, I did not have any experience implementing differentiated instruction in the regular EFL lessons.

3.3 Data collection techniques

Different data collection techniques were implemented as a tool to obtain the information require to answer the question and achieve the purpose of this study.

To answer the question this project used active observations that is “the process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the researcher setting” (Schensul and Lecompte, 1999 p.91). This technique was useful to observe my own attitude or abilities in the natural context were I taught blind students using differentiated instruction. I developed two lessons in four classes. At the end of each class, I implemented thinking aloud protocol in order to capture all the features I observed during the lessons. As stated by Charters, (2003). “The goal of think-aloud research is to give the researcher insight into the processes of working memory.”(p.70) the verbal reflection took place immediately I finished each class in order to remember as much details as possible. Moreover, a teacher journal was written to describe each characteristic I observed during my teaching practice and the impact in the students learning process. Richards & Lockhart (1994). Explains, “A journal is a teachers or student written response to teaching events” (p.7) the use of a teacher

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journal provide me the necessary information to understand my implementation of the strategy. I made reflections, when planning, during the lessons and after the lessons. Besides, to get rich details for my own reflections I used video tapes and audio records, which allowed me to capture those moments that were not appreciate in detail during the lessons. Finally, I implemented students products which are “Techniques used to obtain samples of learner language, typically in order to study processes and stages of development that learners pass through as they develop their second language procedure” (Nunan & Bailey, 2009 p.321) through students products I could contrast the effectiveness of my instruction. For this study, students worked on tasks such as interviews, conversations and role-plays.

3.4 Data analysis

Since this study, explored teacher understanding of differentiated instruction for developing blind learners’ oral interaction. Qualitative data was collected through video and audio records, which was transcribed through the ethnographic narrative in order to specify the important details recorded among the observation. Furthermore, the teacher journal was used to describe each aspect of the experience I had when teaching blind students and their performance during the differentiated lessons. Besides, students’ products helped me to identify student’s performance when interacting orally in the foreign language and the effectiveness of the adaptations implemented in the lessons.

Coding was the tool implemented to analyze the data collected in this study. As stated by Elliot, (2018) “Coding is a way of doing this, of essentially indexing or mapping data, to provide an overview of disparate data that allows the researcher to make sense of them in relation to their research questions” (p. 2851). In other words, a flexible approach that facilitates the process to

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find similarities and differences, which enable to consolidate and divided the data gathered into categories to answer the question. Data gathered was transcribed to be deductively codified. Codes emerged by the reading of each observation narrative and reflections gathered. Key words such as Blind learners, oral participation, challenges and difficulties were located resulting into two categories, for instance, providing instruction that caters for all students and overcoming challenges and turning them into learning opportunities.

4. FINDINGS

The following chapter addresses the most relevant findings answering the leading question of this research: “How do I provide differentiated instruction while ensuring coherent instructional design for developing blind learners’ oral interaction?” Two main categories were identified from the data gathered after the analysis of reflections: instruction should cater for all the students, teacher in DI should locate challenges and overcome difficulties; these categories are supported below with some evidence.

4.1 Providing instruction that caters for all the students

After seven reflections, observations and video reflections of my lessons with DI to teach English to blind learners, I could design DI lessons with some coherent instructional design for encouraging oral interaction among three Blind learners studying English in mainstream context. This analysis is based on self /reflections of my classes, their application and constant insightful descriptions of my actions to achieve the ultimate goal of my everyday planning; understand how to increase blind learners’ oral interaction. To ensure this coherent planning I decided on several adaptations that served to slightly promote students’ interaction. For instance, verbal commentaries, Learners as support workers (LSW), cooperative work activities, scaffolding and modelling which resulted in positive outcomes in blind learners’ oral interaction. The following reflections portrayed the experience with these adaptations and my professional growth on the use of DI. By providing instruction that cater for all my students, I felt I could accommodate

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most of them in the lesson, particularly to engage Blind learners in most of the activities through verbal commentaries, gestures and Spanish input from peers, as stated below:

*Sentí que esta actividad fue muy buena, yo decía las oraciones y a la vez les **hacía gestos** para que pudieran identificar lo que estábamos hablando, a través de los gestos y las imágenes motivaba a los **estudiantes a hacer comentarios verbales** que guiaran a los estudiantes ciegos, y fue muy positivo, porque el estudiante VI **comenzó a participar más**, tratando de acertar el significado de lo que yo decía en inglés. (Appendix 1.)*

One of the adaptations I noticed helped me ensure students' oral interaction was verbal commentaries provided in English or Spanish by students and the teacher. It resulted in favorable input for blind learners understanding of topics. What some teachers may find negative in terms of students' translations, for me in this DI class was positive since translations and explanations from the rest of the class helped me support blind learners understanding, access to audio –visual materials such as images, videos and any other regular material used in the class. This is evident in the following transcript:

17:17 - 18:27 Students giving verbal commentaries in English and Spanish

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | T | <i>Then, I traveled to Medellin</i> |
| 2 | B1 | <i>No:::</i> |
| 3 | S? | <u><i>Se le baró (The student tried to interpret the picture shown))</i></u> |
| 4 | T | <i>Very good. Yes, I traveled to Medellin, AFTER THE BEACH I traveled to Medellin, very good, I traveled to Medellin, by car?</i> |
| 5 | S? | <i>No</i> |
| 6 | T | <i>NO:::</i> |
| 7 | SS | <u><i>en bus, BUS BUS</i></u> |

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- 8 T *En::: Very good::: I traveled to Medellin by BUS ((teacher makes emphasis in the correct pronunciation of the word bus)) very good. And, but the bus got stuck*
- 9 S1 *(Osea se estrelló)*
- 10 T *No:::*
- 11 S2 *Estaba dañado*
- 12 T *Very good::: very good*
- 13 S? *XXX*
- 14 T *What did you say? again, but tienen que decir las ideas mas fuerte(.3) what did you say about?*
- 15 *((in this moment the VI student showed the word card that had the sentence the teacher was mentioning in the moment))*
- 16 T *Very good, our partner there has the sentence (.3) the bus got stuck. Very good!*
- 17 S2 *XXX*
- 18 T *So say it, speak aloud*
- 19 S2 *EL BUS ESTABA DAÑADO*
- 20 T *Yes::: very good*

This adaptation served a lot for encouraging participation as seen above. Despite having used IRF patterns of interaction, I could extract for the first time students' ideas. In this lesson, students were describing the past vacations. I initiated the class with a pre-assessment activity, showing students slides of my last vacations. As seen, in turn one, I said that I traveled to Medellin by showing a picture that evidenced my visit to Medellin by bus. Turn three shows a student giving verbal commentaries of pictures by saying *se le baró*. This prompt helped blind learners to view in their minds the situation I faced in my trip. As seen in turn four, I used false

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affirmations about my last vacation to generate verbal commentaries from regular students. Blind learners remained quiet and focused processing data and interactions in class in English and some comments of students in Spanish. Then, in turn seven, students made verbal commentaries in Spanish describing what they are observing in the picture. I took advantage of it since the comments in Spanish served for input on blind learners to understand the regular materials presented in the class.

Furthermore, to design DI lessons, I found that the use of regular material is suitable to work with blind students as long as they are adapted to the students' needs. During the lessons, verbal commentaries took place every time the teacher described each visual detail, or every movement that implies vision. As evident in turn 14 the student with low vision rose up the word card showing the sentence I was mentioning, it proved the efficacy of verbal commentaries as it motivated blind student's interaction during the development of the class. This is also evident in the following narrative from one of my researcher journal about my interactions with students:

En esta parte cuando estaba diciendo que yo había ido a Medellín el estudiante B1 dijo inmediatamente que no, en este momento yo no estaba haciendo una pregunta, estaba haciendo una afirmación en inglés. Pero me pareció muy bien que el dijera que no, porque esto puso en evidencia que la adaptación de los verbal commentaries si estaban ayudando al estudiante a estar en contexto, Teniendo en cuenta que antes de eso yo había dicho que había ido a Coveñas no a Medellín. (Appendix 2)

Likewise, Regular students' support meant a lot to blind partners during lessons. Their comments, and hand on made material support promoted blind learners oral interaction with

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regular students. Students were asked to play the role of a learner support worker (LSW) at the beginning of the project to engage them in meaningful social work and inclusion. The following reflection represent the importance of this adaption in class.

Me motiva mucho entender como incluso el resto de los estudiantes son una ayuda para incluir a los compañeros. Que la participación del resto de los estudiantes ayuda a que los estudiantes ciegos sean parte de la clase. (Appendix 3)

To generate this cooperative work I organized the classroom in pairs so the students could develop the activities cooperatively. I found that the use of LSW is crucial for including blind learner in a differentiated lesson. The following transcript illustrate the moment when a regular student and I served as a LSW to help the blind student (B2) to participate in the activity proposed:

1 T *Wait a minute, I would like that Bryan, tell me a number, dime un numero, del 1 al::: ((teacher come next to Bryan and touch him))*

2 S? *Al 14*

3 T *Al 14, from one to fourteen, number*

4 B2 *(Seis)*

5 T *Number six:::, yes::: you have number six here(.3) okay todos ustedes hacen esto todos los dias*

6 S? *Yo no*

7 T *But sometimes you do it on weekends*

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- 8 SS *I homework, I do homework*
- 9 T *I, haber Bryan ((then the teacher ask to the LSW what do we have here?))*
- 10 S4 *(read a book)*
- 11 T *Read a book:::*
- 12 B2 *Read a book*
- 13 T *Excellent, so you can say I:::*
- 14 B2 *I*
- 15 T *Read:::*
- 16 B2 *Read*
- 17 T *a book*
- 18 B2 *a book*
- 19 T *Excellent Bryan, so now you again I(.3) read(.3) a book*
- 20 B2 *I(.3) read(.3) a book.*
- 21 T *Excellent, perfect*

In the activity mentioned in the transcript, I pasted some flashcards on the board. Each flashcard had a number from one to fourteen. Moreover, each card hid an image that represented an action. Randomly students chose one card and said a sentence describing the image as an activity they did last weekend. In the first turn, I motivated the blind student to participate. (Appendix 4). Taking into account that it was an activity with visual material, I asked the LSW

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to describe the picture (turn 9). The LSW described in English the activity he observed in the flashcard. Consequently, he offered to blind learners the opportunity to understand and be aware of the image presented in the picture. Then, I served as a LSW helping the blind student to elaborate the sentence with the correct pronunciation of the words (turn 13).

Even though, it was a challenge to verbalize the instruction from videos, images and any visuals in class, I could see how useful it is for addressing blind students' mental representations of what is going on in the classroom. Scaffolding students (blind learners) talk time in English also demonstrated their progress and skill for interacting orally with the teacher. The following transcript evidences how I supported students to motivate them to interact orally:

- 1 T *So, work with your parner, the idea is that you work with your partner with Juan Diego and tell him about your last vacation, what did you do on your last vacation? a? que hiciste en tus vacaciones?*
- 2 B1 *Nada*
- 3 T *What did you do on your last vacation?*
- 4 B1 *Me quedé en mi casa*
- 5 T *So perfect, you are going to write here I stated at home, me quedé en la casa cierto? So as in the example here I stayed at home for example, but did you play soccer? With the ball, did you play soccer? Football*
- 6 B1 *A osea que si jugué football?*
- 7 T *Yes::: or not?*
- 8 B1 *No*
- 9 T *What did you play? am, When you are on your free time what do you do? ¿Cuándo están en el tiempo libre que haces?*
- 10 B1 *Juego videojuegos*
- 11 T *Okay, so maybe on your last vacations you played videogames, did you play videogames on your last vacation?*
- 12 B1 *Yes*

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13 *Very good, so now you are goin to(.3) Juan Diego is going to write here that you played videogames on your last vacation. So now, you stayed at home and you also played videogames, right?*

14 B1 *Right*

Using questions in English as seen in turns 3, 9, 13, pushed students to initiate talk time with the teacher and partners in class about their last weekend. Even though blind learners' responses were limited, they did not translate the question, and instead, they were more familiar to them in the second language.

4.1.1. Modelling lessons for demonstrating tasks.

Modelling activities, tasks and products of lessons, facilitated students' performance during oral activities. It also added to my instruction the needed tools for making sure most the students would do the tasks as planned in my lessons. Modelling language, situations, tasks and activities supported students with clear understanding of what they should do in activities. The following transcript evidence how I demonstrated a role-play.

1 T *You are going to do a role play, van a hacer un role play, de que manera? Pay attention, presten mucha atención miren allá chicos, pay attention because then you don't now what to do, despues no saben que hacer, so hi hello*

2 S1 *Hello*

3 T *How are you?*

4 S1 *Aaaa how are you doing?*

5 T *Fine, thank you, what did you do last weekend?*

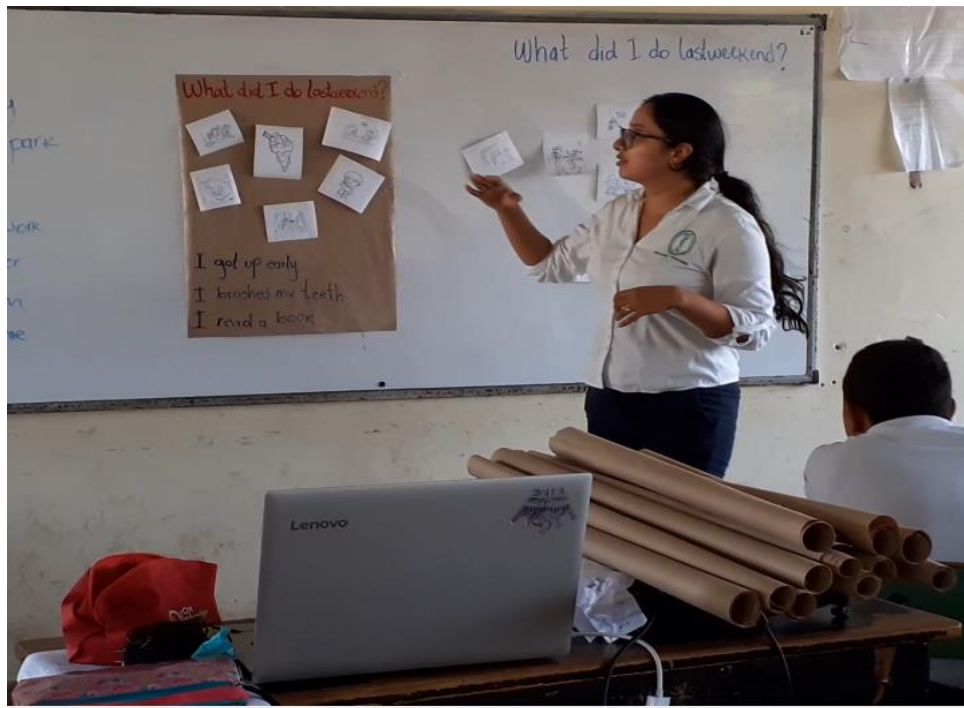
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- 6 S1 *I played soccer, [I went to dancing], I brushed my teeth*
- 7 T *Perfect, very good, whit that is excellent, now you ask me what did you do last weekend, tu me preguntas*
- 8 S1 *Ee hello*
- 9 T *Hello*
- 10 S1 *Eee XXX How are you?*
- 11 T *Fine, thank you*
- 12 S1 *Eee what, what, what did you do last weekend?*
- 13 T *Perfect, last weekend I::: got up early, I::: had sandwich for breakfast and I went to the cinema, so thank you bye bye::: that's it*

As observed, I called a student in front of the class in order to show, how they should participate in it. I gave them three examples, asking students the question what did they do last weekend with three different students. Hence, to start the activity students were clear about what they had to do. I understood that with DI modelling is a significant fact when giving the instruction, with this strategy I supported students so they would perform successfully showing them how should be the product they will present. This modelling provided confidence to the students as they had an example of what language to use, how to pronounce it and which material to design.. The following transcript is a good representation of how I exemplified the product before the students were asked to do it.

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- 1 T *So, pay attention, here this is my poster, esto es un poster right? Pay attention here listen to me, because I will explain what you are going to do. Here I have a poster, I took some images that represent what I did last weekend, estas son algunas imagines, aquí las tengo pegadas en el poster y representan lo que yo hice la semana(.3) el fin de semana pasado, for example, here I have(.3). I got up early, I ate an icecream, I watched TV, I read a book, I brushed my teeth, I went to the park. So here I write three sentences describing what I did last weekend, and right here at the top of the poster we have the title, what did I do last weekend? What did I do last weekend?*
- 2 S1 XXX
- 3 T *So I wrote I got up early, I brushed my teeth and I read a book, right? Then, you are going to do the same. ustedes van a hacer lo mismo*



I was demonstrating how to create a poster. I made my own poster using some examples relative to activities I did my last weekend. Clarifying that the work they should do would be

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similar to the one they were observing on the board. This accommodation resulted in a positive attitude toward the activities since it promoted students' independence to carry out the product, moreover I evidenced that modelling activities encouraged them to emulate my work, which resulted in products much better than the example.

4.1.2. Use of Spanish

Another accommodation that helped design coherent planning for blind learners' oral interaction during DI lessons was Spanish in some particular points in the lesson. L1 from the students and the teacher was a key for illustrating pictures, clarify instruction and helped blind learners create a mental picture of the situation. I noticed it allowed them to increase their vocabulary associating words in their mother tongue with the word in English. Moreover, when I tried to introduce a new topic with the use of regular materials the use of L1 was significant. It offered blind students a clear vision of the language resources used in the lessons. Likewise, the use of Spanish was essential to give the instructions students had to perform. The following transcript shows an episode where L1 was used to introduce a lesson:

- | | | |
|---|----|---|
| 1 | T | <i>Last weekend I got up early(.3) so, last weekend I got up early</i> |
| 2 | S? | <i>Se levantó tarde?</i> |
| 3 | T | <i>No, early, ((teacher show with her hands that it is the opposite of late))</i> |
| 4 | S? | <i>Temprano?</i> |
| | T | <i>Perfect, I got up early, so, to say that we say I got up early(.3) what about you?
Did you get up early or late? Se levantaron tarde o temprano?</i> |
| 5 | SS | <i><u>Early, TARDE:::</u></i> |

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- 6 S1 *Late, late*
- 7 T *Late , who*
- 8 S1 *Teacher I early*
- 9 T *You got up early, so you can say I got up:::*
- 10 S1 *I got up early*
- 11 T *Perfect, so lets see next image. Then:::*
- 12 SS *Se cepillo los dientes, después se cepilló*
- 13 T *I brushed my teeth, perfect very good so,*
- 14 VI *(Me cepillo los dientes)*
- 15 T *Perfect Jesus, so I brushed my teeth right? So first, I got up early and then I brushed my teeth*

As can be seen in the transcript, I mixed the use of English with Spanish, trying to make more emphasis in English. As a result, in turn 14 the blind student repeated the action represented in the image, taking into account his partner's description. Although the blind student's description was in Spanish, it showed the student's awareness of images represented in the slides. Clearly, I insisted on making emphasis on the correct use of the sentence in English. Furthermore, I identified that once the students were familiarized with the topic I reduced the use of Spanish as is exposed in the following transcript:

- 1 T *So::: you remember what we talked about eeee, about previous class, we talk about:: my last:::*
- 2 S3 *Vacation*
- 3 T *VACATION perfect, so, what I said about my last vacations? (.3) I went to::: cartagena?*
- 4 SS *Yes, NO, yes, no*
- 5 T *I went to Cartagena?*
- 6 S3 *No*
- 7 T *I went to Barranquilla?*

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- 8 SS *no:::*
9 B1 *Not*
10 T *I went to Medellin?*
11 S1 *not*
12 B2 *Si:::*
13 T *Yes::: very good Bryan*

In this event, it can be observed that the students' answers were mostly in English. Moreover, I did not use Spanish. In this case, in turn 9 and in turn 12 two of the blind students interacted with me in the class demonstrating a coherent understanding of the topic. As I taught the topic the previous class with the use of Spanish, they did not complain about the use of English in this class.

Then, I perceived that I need to balance the use of Spanish taking into account the students understanding of the topic. Besides, promote the use of English in the classroom without underestimate the students' potential to interact in the L2. Additionally, I comprehend that the use of Spanish is not an obstacle to promote oral interaction in English among blind and regular students. Conversely, if it is used strategically in certain moments of the class it is helpful to enhance student's comprehension of the topic.

4.1.3. Pre-assessment

With Differentiated Instruction, I must pre-assess students' previous knowledge and understanding of the topic in order to decide on language, type of differentiation, use of English, pace of instruction and so forth. The following transcript is an evidence of the interaction in this stage:

- 1 T *on my last vacation::: I went to the beach::: I went to(.3) COVEÑAS(.3) Right? I went to coveñas on my last vacation, Right? So::: I went to Cartagena? ((t raises her voice to lead students to find the correct answer - COVEÑAS))*

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- 2 S? *no*
- 3 T *I went to Cartagena XXX yes or not? NO::: I went to Baranquilla?*
- 4 SS *no:::*
- 5 T *I went to::: Sincelejo?*
- 6 SS *No:::*
- 7 T *where did I go?*
- 8 S? *Coveñas*
- 9 T *I went to coveñas, to the beach*

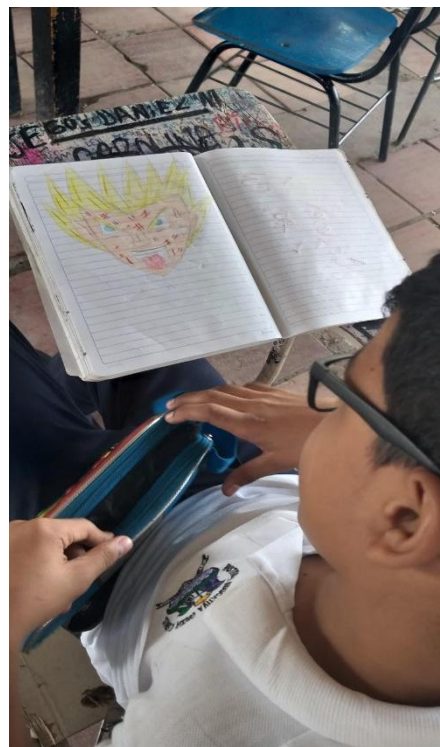
In the pre-assessment described above I talked about my last vacation, I used images that represented each activity I did. While I was describing the activities, I made pauses to ask questions to ensure the students were following the ideas and identify the level of mastery of the topic. I noticed that blind students did not participate when I asked the questions. I got more answer from a reduce number of regular students. Then I could identify what would be the content, process and product to differentiate in the lesson.

The pre-assessment stage is a key element in a differentiated lesson since it offers a general view of the students' readiness from the beginning of the class. Besides, it helped me to decide the most suitable strategies to develop the lesson as in this point the students usually show their interest, understanding and mastery of the topic. As a result, it guided me to decide whether I must do modifications in the following stages of the lesson or not.

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4.1.4. Planning for all

Identifying students' potential is an aspect that must be highlighted when trying to ensure a coherent instructional design. To achieve this goal it is necessary to take into account students' preferences, interest, learning styles, needs and so forth in order to include activities in the lessons according to students multiple intelligences, and learning styles. The following picture presents one of the blind student's preferences:



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The picture above shows a student with low vision drawing. As I noticed the student was doing something different to the class I decided to take it as an advantage for doing some modifications in the lesson planned for next class. As a result, I included an activity that involved painting. This accommodation resulted in a positive response from the student. The previous class the student was sleeping and drawing during the activities proposed. Then, there was a significant improvement in the student interaction in class after adapting the lesson including his preferences. He became more engage in the lessons. The following picture shows the student working on a painting activity related with the topic.



When the student realized, I proposed an activity that included painting he became more engage. From that moment, this student was interested not just in the activities that involved drawings but in every activity proposed during the rest of the lessons.

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The following reflection details how much I could make from theories about planning for all:

Entonces veo que tengo que trabajar más, practicar más en cómo describir cada proceso que hacemos en la clase para hacerlos parte de la clase a todos. Entiendo una vez más que no se trata de que yo me sienta cómoda mientras proveo enseñanza a los estudiantes y que los estudiantes se acomoden a mí, sino que se trata de la manera en que yo debo acomodar mi instrucción para facilitarles el proceso de aprendizaje.

The reflection above described my understanding of the importance to design a student - centered lessons: Thinking on my students wants, needs, or lacks rather than grammar, vocabulary requirements, or my own preferences as a teacher.

4.2 Identifying challenges and overcoming difficulties

To answer the question: How do I provide differentiated instruction while ensuring coherent instructional design for developing blind learner's oral interaction? I realized I faced some challenges concerning with putting theory of DL and inclusion into practice while planning, designing materials and understanding Spanish benefits. The limitations I had in my minds to adapt regular materials and to provide verbal commentaries were also difficult to overcome. The following reflection portrayed a brief description of some of those challenges:

Porque todavía mi mente no se adaptaba al cambio de que yo era quien adaptaba la información que el video ofrece. Aunque entiendo de qué manera debo hacer los comentarios verbales, me siento insegura de que estos vayan a ser efectivos. De hecho, cuando intento practicar de qué manera implementarlos en la clase veo que aún tengo la tendencia a dar por hecho que los estudiantes ciegos están teniendo acceso a las imágenes y a los videos que estoy mostrando.

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The reflection above resulted from the moment I was trying to find a video for the lesson, it took several days to select the video I considered appropriate for teaching blind learners. I understood the challenge when putting theory into practice adapting materials. I overcome this challenge by using co-planning as a strategy to plan the lesson successfully. The following reflection supported the importance of co-planning with more experience partner to understand difficulties and create plans for addressing my needs as a teacher during the DI class:

Analizando con mi asesora del proyecto al respecto pude entender un poco más de qué manera puedo proveer los comentarios verbales (algo de lo que ya había leído y creía tener súper claro) que las opciones son más amplias de lo que mi mente limitaba.

To overcome this difficulty, I implemented the co-planning. I noticed that for special education without co-planning I could not effectively meet the students' needs. Co-planning helped me to ensure the appropriate accommodations to address the specific blind learners' requirements.

On the other hand, I faced a challenge when trying to concentrate on students' potential rather than on students' limitations. The extract from one of my journals revealed how I felt when planning de Differentiated lesson:

Que la participación del resto de los estudiantes ayuda a que los estudiantes ciegos sean parte de la clase, ahora entiendo más que no me puedo enfocar en las debilidades de los estudiantes ciegos y debo enfocarme en las muchas fortalezas que tienen como la escucha.

As evidenced above when planning I comprehended that blind students are just like every regular student. They have strengths and weaknesses and I must take advantage of their strengths to meet their needs. To overcome this limitation on my mind, I tried to be aware of the

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importance and the effectiveness of the verbal commentaries, the use of a LSW, the scaffolding, the use of the L1 and all the accommodations I implemented during the lessons.

All in all, results in this study showed how I improved in the use to DI instruction to respond to blind learners learning process in regular contexts. This chapter also portrayed how I designed lessons to promote oral interaction through DI activities for these students. Through this implementation I overcome challenges that were used as learning opportunities to meet my specific needs as an inclusive education teacher. The following chapter discusses the implications of the main results explained above.

5. DISCUSSION

After seven reflections and four DI classes, I designed lessons to promote oral interaction to blind learners and regular students. After analyzing data, I could understand how DI is used in the classroom to engage blind learners and regular students in coherent planning for their oral interaction improvement as well as my professional growth as a DI teacher.

As portrayed in the findings' chapter, to provide a coherent planning I must design instruction that caters for all students. Pre-assessing them, accommodating my instruction based on the students' potentials; add modeling to each class, scaffolding and using L1. Furthermore, locating the challenges I faced during this process and turning them into learning opportunities helped also understand how DI works for inclusive purposes. All these helped me guarantee an instruction that offer blind students the opportunity to enhance their oral interaction making them part of the same learning goals as regular students. According to Whipple (2012), "There were five items focused on teaching up to all learners, having varied materials, scaffolding, having learners take a role in designing learning activities, and providing assessments that require students to apply skills"(p. 99). This study demonstrated that designing lessons that takes into account the needs of students and their potentials might help a lot to understand how to design materials, plan instruction and give permanent support.

Besides, I found that pre-assessment is a key instrument to identify students started point of a specific topic. Therefore, through the pre-assessment I could decide the most suitable strategies to develop the class successfully taking into account students' mastery of the topic. This is consistent with the study developed by Agudelo and Bohorquez (2015) in which they sustained

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that pre-assessment is a requirement to differentiate the content as it allows teachers to identify students' readiness before deciding on how to differentiate the process and product.

Another finding that illustrates the goal of this study is modeling. I found that modeling was an opportunity for my teaching growth in the use of this pedagogical strategy. Modelling allowed me to provide a clear representation of the lessons and the activities students were required to perform. This relevant strategy is consistent with Burkett (2013) thoughts about modeling, he sustains that students know exactly what it is that they need to do. They work independently at their own pace and those who finished their work first know they need to move onto the next thing and exactly what it is that they need to move on.

Furthermore, this study revealed that the effectiveness of DI is strongly connected with the teacher's ability to design lessons that are centered on the students. When students are motivated with activities that include their interest, needs, abilities and so forth, they engaged more with all the activities proposed by the teacher. Accordingly, rather than trying to accommodate students to a specific type of teaching, the teachers must accommodate their instruction based on how the students learn. This result is consistent with the study conducted by Acosta & Barreto (2016) this study demonstrated that when differentiating a lesson, it is essential to take into account students' facilities, potentials, abilities and aptitudes as strengths. The identification of these abilities will provide the teacher the tools to determine students' needs. It will result in a coherent planning that provides students the opportunity to successfully achieve the learning goals.

This study also unveiled that I should locate the challenges I faced to understand how this theory is transfer to the practice. For instance, I used these difficulties as an opportunity to improve my teaching practice. Then, it helped me in the process of understanding DI in depth

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trying to find the sources to overcome each difficulty. This idea strengthens Lundsford (2017) position that “The teachers agreed that implementing DI could be beneficial to student learning, they also agreed that there are challenges to it” moreover, she adds “The teachers offered their perspectives on what they felt could help them overcome the challenges to implementing DI” (p. 66)

One of the major challenges I faced during the process was the limitations I had when planning the lessons to include blind students within the EFL class, the lacks of ideas to adapt regular materials, and fears about the appropriate use of verbal commentaries. Then, I identified the necessity of co-planning to overcome this challenge when planning the differentiated lessons. Working with a more experienced teacher was meaningful because this support provided different strategies that facilitated the understanding of DI to meet the needs of all. It helped me to understand more how to put into practice all theory I had read, questioned it and realized it during class time.

Nevertheless, I experienced some limitations during this process. First, I found some difficulties with the classroom management, probably due to my tone of voice, or probably the classroom organization. Sometimes, I felt students at the back of the classroom could not hear me. As a result, it generated student’s bad behavior and a lack of concentration. Moreover, sometimes I could not identify the appropriate times to use English and Spanish, taking into account that students complained a lot about the English use during the lessons. I considered that one of the aspects that might help a teacher to face these situations would be that the apprentice teacher receives training by an experienced teacher.

The training might include opportunities for the trainee teacher to observe some differentiated classes developed by an expert. It will provide her or him the opportunity to learn

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from the strategies used by the expert teacher in a differentiated lesson. Thus, for further research collaboration during DI planning might be a case for exploring teachers practice for improving teaching experiences in inclusive practices.

6. CONCLUSION

This study intended to understand how theory we read about DI instruction might be realized in a class intended to engage blind learners in oral interaction activities. While exploring teachers practice having as a goal the improvement of our own practice as teachers before we move to generate immediate changes, represents a space for teachers to grow professionally. This study served as a door for my teaching improvement. Through it, I realized teachers should not select a strategy and pretend to use it as a cure for any problem in class. Instead, it is a more conscious process where teachers should first understand how theory is put into the classroom. It is assumed as an opportunity “a will to learn” that should take place before teachers engage in actual learning activities.

This study also showed that constant reflections of our own practice led teachers to rethink their teaching in each class for further improvement, which resulted in students’ participation in oral activities during the class. The results of this study showed that much work is needed before teachers actually engaged in variety of activities or methods to provoke immediate changes in students’ ways of learning.

Results of this study also showed that it is possible to teach English to diverse classrooms if the needed accommodations are made from teachers’ stereotypes and limitations towards teaching for all. Even though, this process represents much work and time from teachers, the benefits are bigger from students’ improvement and development of unexpected skills such as social understanding, cooperation, participation and citizenship education.

In this research, blind learners showed their talents as regular students did. This showed once more how limited my mind was to understand I had to change and move beyond my zone

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of comfort in my teaching experience. Adaptations, Spanish, and LSW became a challenge at the starting point of my research since I could not understand whether blind students could see a picture and how it could happen. However, through contact with students and reflections of lessons, videos, I could find the benefits for students and for me as a novice teacher in this field.

Pre-assessment, modeling, scaffolding, challenges and theories led to successfully activate blind learners' oral interaction in the classroom. From the first lesson I noticed students' engagement, as shown above, students, particularly blind learners initiated talk time in class by demonstrating they could use English to express simple ideas, ask questions about daily topics and be part of a normal English class.

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8. APPENDIXES

8.1 Appendix 1- Journal 2 lesson

- 1 T Last weekend I got up early(.3) so, last weekend I got up early
- 2 S? Se levantó tarde?
- 3 T No, early, ((teacher show with her hands that it is the opposite of late))
- 4 S? Temprano?
- 5 T Perfect, I got up early, so, to say that we say I got up early(.3) what about you?
Did you get up early or late? Se levantaron tarde o temprano?
- 6 S? Early, TARDE:::
- 7 S1 Late, late
- 8 T Late , who
- 9 S1 Teacher I early
- 10 T You got up early, so you can say I got up:::
- 11 S1 I got up early
- 12 T Perfect, so lets see next image. Then:::
- 13 SS Se cepillo los dientes, después se cepilló
- 14 T I brushed my teeth, perfect very good so,
- 15 VI (Me cepillo los dientes)

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16 T Perfect Jesus, so I brushed my teeth right? So first, I got up early and then I brushed my teeth

Sentí que esta actividad fue muy buena, yo decía las oraciones y a la vez les hacía gestos para que pudieran identificar lo que estábamos hablando, a travez de los gestos y las imágenes motivaba a los estudiantes a hacer comentarios verbales que guiaran a los estudiantes ciegos, y fue muy positivo, porque el estudiante VI comenzó a participar mas, tratando de acertar el significado de lo que yo decía en inglés. Esto fue un gran logro ya que la clase anterior este estudiante no quería participar casi en la clase, de hecho gran parte del tiempo se la había pasado durmiendo en el brazo de la silla. Con esta actividad pude observar que los estudiantes ya venían con mas interés y que estaban mas familiarizados con el tema que estábamos hablando.

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8.2 Appendix 2 – Journal lesson 1

1 T Then, I traveled to Medellin

2 B1 No:::(the blind learner showed understanding of the previous exercise, he is aware i did not go to medellin.))

3 S? Se le baró ((LSW using spanish to guide friends))

4 T Very good. Yes, I traveled to Medellin, AFTER THE BEACH I traveled to Medellin, very good, I traveled to Medellin, by car?

5 S? no

6 T NO:::

7 SS en bus, BUS BUS ((students shouted BUS BUS))

8 T En::: Very good::: I traveled to Medellin by BUS ((teacher makes emphasis in the correct pronunciation of the word bus)) very good. And, but the bus got stuck

9 S1 (Osea se estrelló)

10 T No:::

11 S2 Estaba dañado

12 T Very good::: very good

13 S? XXX

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14 T What did you say? again, but tienen que decir las ideas mas fuerte(.3) what did you say about? ((in this moment the VI student show the word card that had the sentence the teacher was talking about))Very good, our partner there, has the sentence(.3) the bus got stuck. Very good!

15 S2 XXX

16 T So say it, speak aloud

17 S2 EL BUS ESTABA DAÑADO

18 T Yes::: very good

En esta parte cuando estaba diciendo que yo había ido a Medellín el estudiante B1 dijo inmediatamente que no, en este momento yo no estaba haciendo una pregunta, estaba haciendo una afirmación en inglés. Pero me pareció muy bien que el dijera que no, porque esto puso en evidencia que la adaptación de los verbal commentaries si estaban ayudando al estudiante a estar en contexto, Teniendo en cuenta que antes de eso yo había dicho que había ido a Coveñas no a Medellín. De todas formas, para reorientarlos volví a repetir la oración hacienda énfasis en AFTER THE BEACH, I went to Medellín.

Por esto también tomé como una gran ayuda el uso del español por parte de los estudiantes videntes, estos proporcionaban una guía para los estudiantes ciegos.

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8.3 Appendix 3 – Pictures Cooperative work



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8.4 Appendix 4- Second Differentiated lesson

Unit Title: describing past activities

Lesson Title: What did you do last weekend?

Curriculum Area (s): English	Author: Ruth Care
Grade Level: 7 th graders	Author Contact:
Time Required: 2 hours - Wednesday, 8:00 am	Instructional Groupings: partners and peer groups and whole class activities
Basic learning rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Participates in short conversations providing information about him/herself as well as about familiar people, places, and events. ✓ Orally describes people, activities, events and personal experiences orally. 	Citezenship competences: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ I identify and reflect about the consequences of discrimination toward people and the scholar coexistence. ✓ I recognize that people are different and understand that those differences are opportunities to build new knowledge and relationships and make life more interesting and funny.
Materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ppp • Poster with number cards • Wordcards 	Differentiated materials: <p>LSW</p> <p>Verbal commentaries</p> <p>Use of I1 if needed from students as LSW</p>
Overview: In this lesson, students will work cooperatively to learn how to describe their past activities in oral and written activities. This lesson will promote the idea of regular students helping their VI partners to understand information from videos, visual materials as well as written information. Learners will play the role of Learner Support Worker (LSW) to visualize information for their partners. Learners will be able to express actions in past and activities they did last weekend by participating in oral activities in class.	
What will I differentiate? <i>Content Process Product</i>	
How will I differentiate? I will use various adaptations like (LSW), voice descriptions of videos, pictures, ...	
As a result of this lesson students will be able to <p>work cooperatively to help each other achieve the goal of the activities</p> <p>help each other with vocabulary, descriptions and reading materials</p>	

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<p>Respect their partners when they participate</p> <p>Understand differences and my role in them.</p> <p>Describe what I did last weekend in oral and written ways.</p>	
<p>Understand</p> <p>How to express ideas in oral activities</p> <p>Language choices to describe past experiences</p> <p>The Importance to help and support their partners in need</p>	
<p>Know</p> <p>Recognize expression related to past activities.</p> <p>Use questions for interacting with their partners</p> <p>Identify past experiences</p> <p>Respect their partners when they participate</p>	<p>Do</p> <p>Participate in oral interaction activities describing what they did last weekend</p>
<p>Pre-Assessment</p> <p>A power point presentation will be used to identify students' knowledge about the topic "Describing past activities". "What I did last weekend". The slides will show some pictures about the activities the teacher did last weekend. While the teacher describes the activities verbal commentaries will be used to identify students' use of words, familiarity with the topic. Some use of the L1 might help learners' particularly Blind students to understand the images presented on the slides.</p>	
<p>Steps in the Lesson</p> <p>Hook</p> <p>DI Content</p> <p>Using the slides, the teacher will ask students some questions about the slides, for example what did I do last weekend? Teacher give different options to lead the students to remember what they listened and saw. For example, I went swimming or I went to the supermarket. While the teacher is asking about the activities she did last weekend she will paste word cards of each sentence on the board.</p> <p>On the board will be a poster with some cards that have a number from 1 to 16. Each card will hide a picture that represent an activity. The students will select a number. Then the teacher will show the picture hidden in the card. Students will describe the activity as an activity they did last weekend. For example: if the picture is a person in the supermarket the student would say. Last weekend, I went to the supermarket.</p> <p>Process</p>	

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In pairs students will prepare a role play where they ask: what did you do last weekend? And they answer with the activity in past. While students prepare the role-play, the teacher support students with comments and feedback on pronunciation, vocabulary etc.

Product

In pairs, students will present in front of the classmates the role-play

Closure Activity/ Wrap up

The teacher will ask some students to describe what their partners did their last weekend. Based on the information they gave in the role-play.

For example

Maria went to the supermarket

Post- Assessment:

1.Role Play

Additional Resources:

Audio recordings from students´ oral interaction activities

Film for Ruth

Observations : thinking aloud protocol